

Densho Digital Repository  
Naoko Wake Collection of Oral Histories of US Survivors of the Atomic Bombs Collection  
Title: Kathy Yamaguchi Interview  
Narrator: Kathy Yamaguchi  
Interviewer: Naoko Wake  
Location: San Francisco, California  
Date: June 15, 2011  
Densho ID: ddr-densho-1021-1-17

**<Begin Segment 17>**

NW: Well, I don't want to occupy . . . monopolize you too much.

KY: I have to go, I have to go too; did you get enough? I didn't, see, I didn't know why you wanted to talk to me because I don't, I'm not, I can't say that the survivors thing is that big a part of my life.

NW: Oh, no, that's fine. I'm really talking to anyone who, who has different kinds of connections . . .

KY: Ah.

NW: . . . and relationships to survivors in the, you, you're wonderful. So,

KY: You know what, I really have to, I have to say that one of the things that I've really enjoyed is the relationship with the doctors. And because they're like, you know, I was very afraid of going on that trip, you know the training to Japan, because I was afraid, and I think they, I had some reason to be afraid, but I thought they, they were gonna see me, they thought I was a lesbian communist.

NW: Oh. [laughs]

KY: I'm exaggerating. But I think that some of those survivors, they didn't know me, they, I never, I didn't, I didn't have a visible boyfriend, I didn't have a family . .

NW: Well, there's nothing wrong with being communist lesbian, but.

KY: No! Of course not. But I was afraid that they'd shun me because of that. But I go there, and the ones that knew me were so welcoming and they keep saying, kept saying things like "That's Dr. So and so, he was in the student demonstrations of the '70s. And I, and I felt like they were really making a point to tell me that they were in, you know, sort of student demonstrations . . .

NW: Right.

KY: . . . anti-war stuff, anti-nuclear stuff, you know all this, and they were just great to me.

NW: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KY: You know, they were really great to me.

NW: So there is sort of a solidarity connections . . .

KY: Yeah

NW: . . . that they were willing to make.

KY: So they've been different doctors all the time and sometimes they carry over, sometimes they're repeats, and they're just, you know. I think of Japanese businessmen here, I don't like them, they're like, you know, they're . . .

NW: Very macho.

KY: Very macho, very entitled, and a who . . . you don't want to be around them. And I was afraid that it would be like that.

NW: Yeah. [laugh]

KY: In Japan, but what I learned was, and I, it, you know, and the doctors here, the older ones, especially years ago are very formal, stiff. But what I found, what I learned was, when you go to their country, and everything is in their language, it's totally different. Because when you can speak your own language . . .

NW: That's very different.

KY: You can be so much more comfortable . . .

NW: Right.

KY: . . . and human. You know?

NW: Yeah

KY: So it was a really good lesson for me, that to not make judgments on somebody's speaking English . . .

NW: Right, right, yeah.

KY: . . . on what their personality was, because they were totally different.

NW: Right.

KY: They were totally different in Japan.

**<End Segment 17> - Copyright © 2011 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.**